

## **Integrated Pest Management helps schools stay clean and pest free**

As school bells across the state ring in the new school year, most school systems set their sights on the three Rs: Reading, Writing and 'Rithmetic.

The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry Pesticide Division wants school administrations to also think about Roaches, Rats and Round-up.

"Pests in schools are not something parents want to think about when they send their kids to school," Agriculture and Forestry Commissioner Mike Strain said. "They start thinking about it hard if pests become a problem in the classroom."

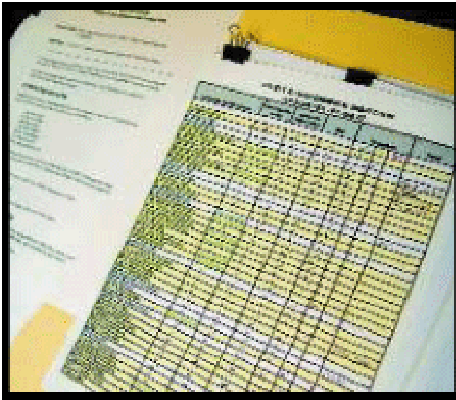
Roach infestations and rodent problems can be hazardous to students' health, and when not used in the proper manner, so can the cure.

"Pesticides need to be handled by properly licensed and trained personnel, or they can be extremely harmful for the kids, teachers and administrators as the pests," Strain said. "The LDAF is pledged to working with state school systems to ensure our Louisiana students are protected from unnecessary and potentially harmful exposure to pesticides in the classroom, the cafeteria and the playground."

Strain said Louisiana Pesticide Law protects children and school staff members and encourages schools to use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices. LDAF is the chief enforcement agency when it comes to making sure pesticides are used properly in schools.



Licensed commercial pesticide applicator Charlie Guilbeau (left) and LDAF Ag Environmental Specialist Supervisor Tim Robin (right) inspect a food storage room at Lafayette Middle School.



Proper record keeping is an important part of implementing integrated pest management plans in schools.

Strain singled out the Lafayette Parish public school system as an example of success when it comes to keeping crawling critters out of the classroom.

But it took a lot of work to be the best, said Lafayette Parish School Board Pesticide Manager Charlie Guilbeau.

"I wanted to quit the first day I took the job," Guilbeau said. "We had German roaches in the school kitchens. They had tried sprays and fogs. It was pas bon (no good)."

Guilbeau took the IPM strategies, which calls for the minimal application of pesticides by using pest management methods, to heart.

"For our kitchens we began using roach traps," Guilbeau said. "For our teacher lounges and offices, we use baiting methods. We can do that during the day because it's not a spray and it doesn't smell. We don't use anything that smells."

Rick Poulan, Lafayette Middle School Principal, was very pleased with Guilbeau and the school board's pest management plan.

"It's working good," Poulan said. "Real good."

Marty Pousson, LDAF pesticides program coordinator, said other IPM strategies are: eliminating pest habitats near schools by keeping vegetation, shrubs and mulch at least one foot away from structures; preventing pest entry into buildings by installing or repairing screens and caulking and sealing openings in walls; eliminating mold and fungi growth by keeping bathrooms as dry as possible; and practicing sanitation by regularly emptying trashcans and properly cleaning after eating.

"The law also requires schools to prepare an IPM plan annually that details how the school will prevent and control pest problems," Pousson said. "The plan must be on file in the school office and available for parents and the general public to review."

When needed, Tim Robin, LDAF Ag Environmental Specialist Supervisor visits the Lafayette Parish schools.

"The Lafayette school plan works really well," Robin said. "Everybody, from the superintendent, to the principals, to the teachers, knows what to do. They have an outstanding plan and procedure."

Roaches and mice can be problems in schools but Guilbeau said he has had trouble with fleas, spiders, snakes, squirrels, opossums, armadillos, nutria, bats, sparrows and starlings.

"We haven't had any problems with alligators," Guilbeau said with a dramatic pause. "Yet."

The IPM plans, which became part of the pesticide law in 1995, are to be submitted

to the department by Aug. 1 each year along with a record of pesticide applications from the previous school year.

IPMs must include: the brand name and EPA number of the pesticides proposed for use; type of pesticide; pest to be controlled and the type and location of each application; other methods of pest control; and the name and certification number of the certified commercial applicator.

The pesticide law, which applies to all public and private elementary and secondary schools in the state, says anyone applying pesticides in, on, or around school structures and grounds must be a certified commercial applicator or under the supervision of a certified commercial applicator.

Guilbeau said sometimes school principals don't trust the process.

"We had a school with a flea infestation. The principal said over the intercom that we have a flea problem. We'll have to call in the professionals," Guilbeau said. "She didn't know I'm a professional. I am a certified applicator and we go in every school and kitchen every month to do an inspection."

Schools can either contract with a pest control company or use a school employee who is appropriately certified to make pesticide applications. School systems with less than 10 schools must employ one certified commercial applicator while school systems with 10 or more schools must employ at least two certified commercial applicators.

"Trained and tested certified commercial applicators like Charlie Guilbeau know how to safely apply pesticides. It's a safety layer of protection for students and faculty," Strain said.

Strain noted that pesticide applications can only be made when students are not expected to be on school grounds for at least eight hours after the application. Parents of students who are hypersensitive to pesticides should submit a written statement to the school.

For more information, contact the Department of Agriculture and Forestry's Office of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at 225-925-3763.



Little things like keeping trash dump bins covered and closed keep vermin and other pests away from the school grounds.

